



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



Institutional Trial Quality Audit of the University of South Africa

UNISA | 
university
of south africa

August 2007

Commonwealth of Learning

Institutional Trial Quality Audit of the University of South Africa

August 2007



Contents

1.0 Executive summary	5
2.0 Overview of the trial audit	10
3.0 Institutional mission and fitness for purpose – the role of an ODL institution	16
4.0 Equity and transformation.....	21
5.0 Linking planning, resource allocation and quality management	24
6.0 Teaching and learning.....	31
7.0 Arrangements for Quality Assurance, development and monitoring of research.....	57
8.0 Quality Assurance, development and monitoring of post-graduate education	59
9.0 Community engagement	61
10.0 Benchmarking and surveys	62
11.0 The Graduate School of Business Leadership	63
12.0 International partnerships	64
13.0 Note on Business Architecture	65
14.0 Summary of Commendations and Recommendations	67
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Acronyms	77
Appendix 2: The Trial Audit Panel	79

1.0 Executive summary

What follows is a report on the findings of the Trial Audit Panel (TAP) after studying a range of documentation before and during the audit and discussing issues with a wide range of Unisa staff during our visit to the University in June 2007. We have had some difficulty with terminology and with the conceptual nature of the report. Originally, we set out to try to replicate the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) audit procedures and this was successful to some extent. However, we were also asked, because of the significant number of panel members with open and distance learning (ODL) experience, to provide some advice and suggestions to Unisa.

Our original intention was to produce two reports; one in the format and language of HEQC executive summary reports and one providing more specific advice and suggestions. In the end, it proved difficult to disentangle the two approaches, so what follows is a report comprising both aspects. This led to some terminology problems especially with the use of the word ‘commendation’. We wish to make it clear that when we highlight commendations we are reflecting on areas where Unisa meets the HEQC expected outputs and not necessarily commendations for significant strengths and innovations. Where we do feel there are such strengths and innovations we have starred the commendation.

There are 29 Commendations and some 53 Recommendations. We are aware that there is a significant variation in the detail of Recommendations, with some being very specific, e.g., the recommendation that all students should have a Unisa e-mail address, and others much broader, e.g., the use of *myUnisa* system for significant pedagogical input. Therefore, in this summary, we have clustered together some of the main issues we identified.

Our clusters are as follows:

- Mission, planning and management
- Transformation
- ODL and ICT issues
- Communication between teachers and learners
- Human Resource issues
- Quality Assurance

1.1 Mission, planning and management

The vision of Unisa is undoubtedly inspiring and we believe that the University should become one of the great ODL institutions of the 21st century.

The vision is clearly set out by the Vice Chancellor and his senior staff and by Council members. Strategic and operational planning is thorough and comprehensive. However we did note, time and time again, that operational targets, especially in relation to significant change, were missed. We know that Unisa management is aware of this and is trying to rectify the situation, in part by developing performance contracts. Nevertheless, we have concerns that the University is trying to do too much too quickly. We understand, in part, the pressures that the University is under from the Government to offer courses outside the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and to be a comprehensive university with all that implies in terms of those programmes which are not easily offered in an ODL mode; for example, Work Integrated Learning. We also know that the University is trying to explain to the HEQC and others the nature of a major ODL institution and the constraints the financial and staffing structures of such an institution place on some types of development. In our view, and in the view of the Senior Management Team, the core business of the University is teaching its undergraduate and post-graduate students and securing effective services for these students to raise throughput in RSA and elsewhere.

1.2 Transformation

As with the other universities in the RSA, there are significant issues here which will take many years to be resolved. Clearly, there is some unrest amongst groups of staff and students in terms of a belief that they are still treated as second class. Our report provides some examples. ODL has a great potential to open up access and promote social justice and, as such, it is key that the programme to ensure that all understand the principles and practices of this mode of teaching and learning is extensive and comprehensive.

1.3 ODL and ICT issues

We note and applaud the programme established by the University to raise awareness of the key characteristics of open and distance learning.

Nipper (1989)¹ first developed a taxonomy of the stages in the evolution of distance education and drew to the attention of the distance teaching world the issues of the use of information and communications technologies (ICT). He describes three generations of distance education institutions. In our view, Unisa is still primarily a *second* generation distance education institution using mainly printed materials, satellite broadcasting and other

¹ Nipper, S. (1989). Third Generation distance learning and computer conferencing. In *Mindweave: Communication, Computers and Distance Education*, Oxford: Pergammon, 1989.

media and which has not yet fully embraced the opportunities and potential of computer-mediated communication.

We noted that large numbers of Unisa students have access to the Web and are using it in a range of ways. Although we are acutely aware of the implications for access of moving a substantial amount of communication with Unisa students to Web or through e-mail/SMS, we do not think that the University can delay any longer the further development of its web-based provision. This needs to be phased in with existing approaches operating alongside for some time.

Although we have no evidence, given the geographical spread of Unisa students in the RSA and in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region, we wonder how many students are able to attend face-to-face tutorial sessions on a regular basis. We suspect more might have access to the email, SMS or the Web.

Therefore, we strongly believe that many of Unisa's current operational problems relating to providing a good service to students could be alleviated if there was a whole-hearted commitment by staff (and perhaps academic staff in particular) to working through the Web.

We are not necessarily referring to the delivery of course materials through the Web because we are aware of the additional cost of developing web-based teaching materials. Nor are we advocating the transmission by the Web of core teaching materials as this can lead to the transfer of costs from the institution to the student. Rather, we see that *myUnisa* or an associated system could be used more systematically and more universally in the institution for academics to contact students and run discussion groups, for the submission of assignments, for student *self-help* groups, for the provision of advice and guidance, and for further development of administrative services.

1.4 Communications between teachers and learners

A significant proportion of this report is devoted to the core activity of teaching and learning. The process of communication between teachers and learners is critical in any educational institution but in an ODL university it takes on a different dimension. In order to ensure the best circumstances for effective learning, ODL institutions have to ensure close co-operation among academics, planning and operational staff.

The most excellent teaching materials are of little use to the student unless they arrive safely and on time to enable study to take place calmly and at the right pace. Similarly, students need to be able to contact the institution easily and receive speedy and accurate information, advice and guidance on a range of issues. In particular, it is critical that students should

receive timely personal feedback on their work. The systems, both management and operational, to ensure that this happens are a core element of any ODL institution.

In a large institution such as Unisa, operating across a wide geographical area and across national boundaries, securing the processes to ensure effective communication among teachers, counsellors/advisers and learners, assumes an even greater importance.

1.5 Human resource issues

Almost everyone we spoke to in the University suggested that the issue of the harmonisation of terms and conditions of service and the position regarding the future of the Florida campus were major factors in the slow pace of change, which is evident in many parts of the institution.

Our report does not address these issues directly, as we are aware of the complexities and we are simply not qualified to advise. However, we do report on the serious impact on morale across the institution - and we know that the senior staff are well aware of these matters. We do, however, comment on more detailed matters. We believe that all interview panels should be chaired by persons who have undertaken a *fair selection* programme and that all interview panels should ask questions designed to explore whether the interviewee has a thorough understanding of ODL and of equity issues.

We also noted that there was some concern amongst Black staff regarding the implementation of promotions policy. In another area, we had some concerns about the hiring of contract staff and, although we tried, we could not find any statement or procedure about the processes involved here.

We were uneasy about the re-hiring of those who had retired without a formal competitive process and reflected on how this might impact on equity targets.

1.6 Quality Assurance (QA)

The QA structure set up by the University has already helped to raise awareness of the importance of a culture of continuous improvement and monitoring. To date, it has focussed mainly on the preparation for the trial audit. The TAP is confident that the system for QA will serve Unisa well once it has become embedded in the normal processes of the University and when the relationship between the QA committees and other key committees responsible for the quality of service, e.g., the Senate Tuition Committee, has been clarified.

We feel enormously privileged to have been asked by COL and Unisa to undertake this trial audit and we do hope that what follows is of use to the University as it prepares for the real thing in 2008. We are aware that we may have misunderstood some issues in some areas (indeed it would be very surprising if we had not) and we apologise if that is the case. Furthermore, the Trial Audit Panel acknowledges that the Recommendations in this report may take some time to implement if accepted and we realise and fully accept that Unisa may not agree with some of our thoughts and conclusions.

Finally, all of us wish the University the very best for the future and look forward to seeing it develop into one of the great distance teaching institutions in the world.

The Trial Audit Panel
August 2007

2.0 Overview of the Trial Audit

2.1 Introduction

The University of South Africa (Unisa) is scheduled for a Quality Assurance audit in the 2007-2009 cycle of institutional audits undertaken by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE). This institutional audit of Unisa will occur in August 2008. In preparation for this audit, the University decided to invite the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (www.col.org) to undertake a *trial audit*. COL responded positively to this proposal and its Higher Education Specialist, Dr W. Clarke-Okah, established a panel comprising distance learning specialists and others with specific expertise in relevant areas to undertake this audit (see Appendix 2 for the list of members).

The audit took place from 18-22 June 2007 and what follows is the report of the Trial Audit Panel (TAP). The report comprises an overview of Quality Assurance management arrangements at Unisa, some comments and suggestions that Unisa might wish to consider, and Commendations and Recommendations that are based on the findings of the TAP using, for the most part, the audit criteria set by the HEQC.

2.2 The audit scope, process and approach

In his letter to the President and Chief Executive of the Commonwealth of Learning, Unisa's Vice Principal for Strategy, Planning and Partnerships set out the goals of the trial audit, which were to *'encourage and support Unisa to:*

- *Establish a culture of continuous improvement by means of quality processes built on the HEQC and institutional-set criteria;*
- *Establish regular internal reviews of its academic programmes and academic departments with the ultimate objective of attaining self-accreditation status for its programmes by the HEQC;*
- *Establish a Quality Assurance system for the support services that includes regular internal reviews of these services;*
- *Identify any weaknesses in our QA systems, processes and instruments with a view to effecting remedies prior to the HEQC audit'.*

Furthermore, the Vice Principal stressed that *'the scope of the trial audit should be aligned with the HEQC criteria for institutional audit relating to the institutional policies, systems, strategies and resource for managing quality in the core areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement'*.

The fact that Unisa is an open and distance learning institution, and the single dedicated one in the South African Higher Education landscape, was the main reason why an international panel, including distance educators, was chosen to undertake the trial audit. Unisa conducted a major self-evaluation exercise as part of the preparation for the trial audit and produced a substantial self-evaluation document, the *'Portfolio for the Commonwealth of Learning Trial Audit'*. The TAP met with Unisa staff in Cambridge, UK in March 2007, where it was briefed on the background to the South African Higher Education system and its quality policies and was provided with a comprehensive set of data relating to Unisa's policies and practices.

During the week 18-22nd June, the TAP met, or spoke via tele-conference link, with 415 unduplicated interviewees, including:

- Unisa Council members
- The Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor and members of the senior management team
- Members of Senate and of other Senate committees
- The Deans of Colleges
- Heads of Departments
- Academic and Support staff
- Professional and administrative support staff
- Research staff
- Undergraduate and post-graduate students
- Regional staff
- International staff
- Alumni
- Representatives of staff and student organisations
- External representatives

The methodology for the trial audit was based upon that used by the HEQC in relation to (a) the use of the Portfolio, (b) the use of interview sessions and (c) the production of a report identifying positive features (hereafter called 'Commendations') and areas for improvement ('Recommendations') based on a number of published criteria. However, the TAP could not, nor would it wish to, replicate the HEQC methodology in its entirety, as no members were trained HEQC auditors nor did the TAP have the same amount of time in which to review the documentary evidence base. This report, therefore, represents the findings of an international group of experts, based primarily on the interview sessions with Unisa staff and others together with the Portfolio and other information provided in the appendices. We did not have the time to undertake detailed audit trails through the extensive documentation provided by the University during the week of the trial audit.

The TAP wishes to record its appreciation for the professional and successful organisation and implementation of the trial audit, including the development of the Portfolio document, collation of a formidable range of supporting documentation and the logistical arrangements for the trial audit. The TAP also wishes to thank all of the participants for their open and frank engagement with the Panel.

2.3 Overview of the new Unisa

The new Unisa was founded in January 2004 when the old Unisa merged with the distance teaching Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) and the Distance Education Campus of Vista University (VUDEC). Unisa is the only dedicated public open and distance education institution in South Africa and now serves around 250,000 students, which is in excess of 30% of headcounts in the public higher education system in South Africa.

Open and distance learning (ODL) is a well accepted mode of tertiary/higher education internationally and is a particularly appropriate model to serve:

- working people who wish to attain new skills and qualifications,
- those who, for reasons of geographical proximity, financial constraints and the desire for greater flexibility in their learning, may not be able to attend traditional face-to-face classes, and
- those older adults who did not have a ‘first chance’.

Unisa now faces the additional challenge of ensuring that its programmes and services respond to the changing profile of a student body with more school leavers wishing to study with the University. The University is also designated as a *comprehensive university* and this again poses a major challenge, combining, as the title implies, the traditional university curriculum (of the old Unisa) with the more vocationally-oriented curriculum of the former TSA. Assuming it can rise to these challenges, the University is in a prime position to play a major role in transformation issues in South Africa, in SADC countries and in the wider continent. The TAP considers that the University is still in the early stages of this epic journey.

Merging large institutions is a complex matter and the senior management of Unisa has had, and continues to have, a major task in reconciling a range of differences, from cultures to terms and conditions of service and working practices across the three merging institutions. The TAP notes, from the Portfolio and the discussions with senior managers, that these issues are affecting the morale of the institution and are a significant contributor to the slow pace of change.

The University is to be congratulated for the production of the comprehensive Portfolio and the ways in which it addresses many of the challenges facing Unisa in an honest and forthright way.

What is happening at Unisa is one of the major change management projects in higher education anywhere. Not only are the issues of merger complex and time consuming (with some issues reliant on lengthy union negotiations for resolution), but the institution has also rightly tasked itself with re-defining what it means to be an ODL institution in the early part of the 21st century. Change at this scale inevitably leads to tension and obstacles, and Unisa is actively seeking to address these. The table below sets out some examples of the transformational shifts which are necessary to effect institutional change and quality enhancement.

TABLE 1

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO CHANGE AND TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS	COMMENT
Complexity	Simplicity and appropriate standardisation	
Harmonisation of terms and conditions of service	Staff to buy into need for change	<i>Delayed resolution of terms and conditions issue is a contributor to low morale</i>
Misunderstanding by some of the principle of academic freedom	Curriculum needs to be more focussed and demand rather than supply driven	
Devolution to Colleges. lack of clarity about the devolved responsibilities of Deans	Need for university-level policies and practices, but responsibility for implementation devolved	<i>Unless very clear reasons why there should be exemptions</i>
Increasing student numbers	Need to ensure excellent services to all students and improve student throughput	
Change of student profile	Need to re-engineer courses to be more suited to younger learners and those with diverse needs	

INSTITUTIONAL TRIAL QUALITY AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Desire to be a university of the first choice	But it is an ODL institution	<i>Issues about suitability of ODL for school leavers</i>
Poor retention rates, especially of new staff	Need to address salary structure, mode of operation with some staff having a student:lecturer ratio as high as 750:1	<i>Teaching model not attractive to academics</i>
Lack of understanding by staff of ODL	Unisa's major contribution is through its ODL provision and all staff need to understand this	
Too ambitious a strategic plan	Services under strain and not meeting the needs of some South African students	<i>Concerns about abilities to provide services to students outside South Africa (and the QA mechanisms for learner support in this context)</i>
Tradition of openness in admission	Managed access	<i>Need to explain why to potential students</i>
Insufficient focussed research; no clear research plan	Putting the student first through teaching and learning and institutional research	<i>ODL institutions should give high priority to systemic research as it is crucial for institutional development</i>
Unsustainable teaching model	Need to re-think teaching model urgently	<i>Resistance amongst some academics. Difficulty in recruiting tutors to assist with marking</i>
Large numbers of modules	A smaller, more focussed Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM)	
Supplier-led tutoring and learner support model	Demand-led (meeting student needs) tutoring and learner support model	

Supplier-led curriculum	Demand-led curriculum	<i>Including demands from Department of Education (DOE)</i>
Multiple delivery models	Simplified and standardised delivery models	
Lack of take up and use of myUnisa by staff	Need to place ICT at the centre of development	<i>Resistance to change by some academic staff</i>
Centralisation of staff recruitment processes	Need ensure progress towards transformation targets whilst speeding up recruitment processes	<i>Routing appointments through HR slows everything down but keeps control of appointments</i>

Commendation 1

The TAP commends the Unisa Senior Management and many of its staff for their understanding of the need to establish a culture of continuous improvement, to embrace appropriate change and to urgently manage this change across the institution.

3.0 Institutional mission and fitness for purpose - the role of an ODL institution

3.1 General points

Comprehensive open and distance education at university level is vital for transformation in South Africa and for the internationalisation of offerings and support for other African countries.

The Unisa mission, vision and values are clearly set out in the 2015 Strategic Plan and are in line with the needs of the nation in its effort to increase and widen the number of those participating in higher education. The Strategic Plan, which sets out with great clarity the strategies and targets for the next eight years, is an exciting, inspiring and in some places (for example, 5.2) a painfully honest document. If Unisa gets within distance of this vision by 2015, it really will be able to state with confidence that it is one of the world's greatest ODL institutions. The challenges facing Unisa are well-known and understood by Senior Management and are well articulated in the Portfolio (*Section 3, page 335*); 'We believe we have a sound strategic planning and policy framework for teaching and research that will ensure quality *if implemented and monitored*' (our italics).



Commendation 2

The TAP commends Unisa for its inspiring and challenging mission, the mission's fitness for purpose in contributing to transformation in South Africa and for the clarity with which the Strategic Plan is written with its challenging and focussed targets.

Recommendation 1

The TAP agrees with the proposal for an independent review of the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan on a three to five-year basis and suggests that this be undertaken immediately after the HEQC audit in late 2008 (Portfolio page 25).

3.2 Understanding of the role of an ODL institution

It is somewhat surprising, for institutions that have been teaching at a distance for many years, and whose staff have benchmarked with other leading ODL institutions in the world regularly since 1993, that many colleagues still lack understanding of the principles of ODL. The TAP agrees with Unisa's Senior Management and Council that it is absolutely imperative for the quality of teaching and learning that all Unisa staff, students and potential students have a full understanding of what it means to be an ODL institution in the 21st century and that staff support the usage of appropriate delivery systems (*see also Recruitment on Page 51*).

ODL implies a physical separation of the teacher from those being taught. The only teaching for all takes place through students studying via print, multi-media and online materials and teachers responding to student work and questions by commenting on written assignments, being available to answer telephone and e-mail queries about course content, and, in the case of Unisa, dispatching generic tutorial letters.

Students must be aware that, although there may be face-to-face tutorial sessions, these are optional (unless designated as compulsory and assessed elements of a programme such as practical work in science) and may entail a good deal of travel. ODL support services, such as careers and counselling and support for the disabled, whilst being available through regional centres and the main campuses, cannot, by their very nature, be available to all. The only solution to this, in our view, is to develop interactive distance learning materials for learner support providing information, advice and guidance with self-assessment activities with online and telephone back-up (in addition to face-to-face provision for those who can attend regional or local centres.)

In our discussion with staff and students, we heard the demand for more and more face-to-face tuition. Indeed, some students said there should be regular classes as in traditional universities. We believe this would be a retrograde step and we strongly suggest that the University puts all its efforts into developing its teaching and support materials that are more

stand alone and clearer in their learning objectives. The development of more courses with a strong visual element, perhaps using CD-ROM and web-based technology, could go a long way in meeting the learning needs of the new profile of students. We believe more effort should be put into developing *myUnisa* as the vehicle of the future for tutorial, peer group and learner support, whilst maintaining current approaches for the present. The arguments on the digital divide must be taken into account, but the fact that not all students have access to online systems should not delay Unisa in developing its teaching and support systems using this medium. After all, not all students by any means can attend face-to-face tutorials or counselling sessions always and everywhere.

One final point: ODL institutions are predicated on handling large volumes of students. The cost structure, with high set up costs that are amortised across large numbers of students for several years, is a major factor contributing to ODL's cost effectiveness. This in turn means that ODL institutions need to think very carefully and clearly about the costs of introducing other approaches which do not have these characteristics. At Unisa, this applies particularly to programmes that are very far from meeting benchmarks for viability. Other costs such as those associated with Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) must also be factored into costing methods so that costing is more accurate and complete. The TAP acknowledges that the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the HEQF expect comprehensive universities to operate across the full spectrum of provision. However, the funding bodies must accept that there are additional costs of such a provision in an institution which is structured to provide a more standardised and high volume programme.



Commendation 3

The TAP commends Unisa for establishing its programme of awareness-raising among the existing staff of the nature of ODL and how it differs from working in a traditional higher education institution.

Recommendation 2

Relevant exposure to the ODL programme should be mandatory for all teaching and relevant support staff. The University should also consider how it can ensure that future staff are informed about the nature of the institution before their appointment. It may also wish to reflect on the reasons for the lack of understanding of the nature of the institution by a substantial number of younger students and potential students.

Recommendation 3

Unisa should consider giving high priority to the further development of myUnisa for pedagogical purposes to help position itself as an ODL institution of the 21st century.

3.3 The issue of openness

There is a continuing debate about the meaning of openness in the context of an ODL institution. We understand and support the strategy of Unisa to be the first choice for older students who may have commitments at work or within the home, but we do have some concern that current support structures and approaches to teaching may not be appropriate for school leavers who wish to study full-time.

The phenomenon of the *revolving door* is well understood in ODL. Some institutions still maintain a totally open policy, where the student makes the decision to join a course rather than the institution, but this is increasingly rare. The TAP is in agreement with Unisa's plan to develop and extend its managed access programme across the University at the undergraduate level in order to improve throughput, and reduce drop out rates and the resulting damage to self esteem.

Commendation 4

The TAP commends Unisa for its plan to introduce managed open admissions across the University in 2008.

3.4 Focussing on priorities

To ensure that Unisa fulfils its mission as a leading ODL institution, committed to 'putting the student first', and to student access and success as part of its contribution to transformation and social justice, it may be necessary for Unisa to prioritise even further its main goals over the next few years. The TAP believes that the priority should be to ensure that robust systems are developed to support students more effectively than at present, especially as the SA government is committed to further expansion as a result of greater demand from younger students and the SA economy. Once this core business is secure, demonstrated by increasing student throughput and satisfaction with services, then further

geographical expansion and the maintenance and development of a wide research base would be appropriate.

Recommendation 4

Unisa may wish to re-visit its priorities to ensure that the provision of improved services to students in South Africa, including the support of younger students – leading to improved throughput – is made clearer as the main priority for all staff.

4.0 Equity and transformation

4.1 General discussion

As an open and distance education institution, Unisa is committed to widening access to, and successful participation in, comprehensive higher education. Its size and ambitious strategic plan ensure that it has a major role to play in South Africa. However, in terms of employment equity there is still much to do, as is the case in many other institutions in South Africa and elsewhere.

Table 9 on page 65 of the self evaluation Portfolio demonstrates this well and the subsequent pages 66 and 67 show a very clear awareness of the challenges facing the institution. For example, there is an imbalance of race and gender in Levels 4-10 of the Peromnes scale. The employment equity policy is still in draft form at the time of this trial audit. We have little to add to this clear institutional analysis beyond providing a few anecdotal comments made by Black staff and students during our audit visit.

- *It is alleged by some that the Equity Employment Directorate is not as visible now as it is located in the Office of the Principal.*
- *Students commented on the attitudes of some White staff, giving as an example the refusal to conduct a seminar in English.*
- *Students we saw both in a group and privately were of the opinion that they were not supported as well as others because of who they were.*
- *Some Black staff alleged that, from their point of view, academic promotion procedures were unfair. We asked for, but were unable to see, the minutes of the Academic Staff Promotions Committee, so were not able at the time to reach specific conclusions on this concern.*
- *Black research staff and even Black professors said they felt marginalised by the majority of academics in Unisa and their work not recognised, even though they were as highly rated as others within the national system.*

We acknowledge that all the above allegations are without any supporting evidence. However, they are an indication of some unrest within the institution and clearly this has implications for meeting HEQC targets.

Recommendation 5

In the interests of openness and equity, a careful review should be undertaken of academic staff promotions policies and practices. Each promotions cycle should begin with targets and culminate in the publication of data pertaining to the number of staff applying for promotion and the number achieving it by race, disability and gender.

The TAP noted that diversity workshops are now being established throughout the institution and that staff are being encouraged to attend. Unisa's management might consider ways of encouraging a high degree of involvement in such workshops or alternative approaches, to ensure a greater understanding of the diversity and equal opportunities issues amongst its entire staff. There are online programmes that provide training and self-assessment. The Unisa management might consider how it could provide incentives (requirements and/or rewards) to ensure maximum take-up of such training, which is central to Unisa's mission. If it is not already the case, it might be useful for those who chair interview panels to be provided with examples of diversity questions that could be asked of candidates for all posts.

Recommendation 6

Unisa Senior Management might wish to consider ways of ensuring that equal opportunities and diversity training are implemented across the institution.

The TAP was surprised that contract staff can be appointed, as we understand it, without advertisement. Again, we have some concern that such staff may not be included in the staffing profile of the institution (although we are unclear about this). We have concerns, however, about the widespread use of contract staff and its impact on the quality of the work of the institution. (By contract staff we mean full-time academic staff and not tutors or additional markers). Whilst we support the establishment of an 'early retirement' policy in the University, we do have concerns that staff may be re-hired on a contract basis after securing a package. The consequent impact on staffing equity targets then becomes problematic.

Commendation 5

The TAP commends Unisa for establishing an early retirement policy and suggests that the institution may wish to offer financial settlements over a relatively narrow window of time to encourage speedy decision-making by individuals. We also think that the University should examine the consequences of re-hiring retired staff on a contract basis for its equity targets.

4.2 Complaints and appeals

Although there is an Ombudsman, accessed, in our view somewhat surprisingly through the Office of the Principal, we could not readily trace any formal complaints, grievance or academic appeals procedures. We believe there should be a formal grievance procedure for staff alongside the disciplinary procedure. As far as the students are concerned, they must be able to make formal complaints through an accessible, visible and well-structured complaints process long before the need to approach the Ombudsman. In addition, we could not readily identify a formal academic appeals process where students could appeal against their continuous assessment or examination grades. Such procedures should be highlighted clearly in documentation received by students. The reason we include these issues here is because of their bearing on equity and quality issues.

Recommendation 7

The office of the Ombudsman should be independent of the University management and its location should demonstrate this.

Recommendation 8

There should be clear procedures for complaints and grievances for staff and students, and a separate academic appeals process and detailed records should be kept of complaints (page 67 Portfolio).

5.0 Linking planning, resource allocation and quality management

5.1 Planning

Unisa's operational plan is a quality document which specifies goals, actions, performance measures, targets, and accountable and responsible persons. It is assumed that those accountable and responsible for the actions are committed to and signed up to the performance measures.

From what the TAP could gather during its short, intensive visit, some of the targets in the 2007 operational plan, as in the 2006 operational plan, are likely to be missed. As the Vice Chancellor and Principal states in his introduction to the 2007 Operational Plan, *'in interrogating our performance in relation to the objectives set in the 2006 Operational Plan, it became evident that there may be a disjuncture between operational planning and the Strategic plan. Consequently, an increased emphasis has been placed this year on integration and connectivity between operational planning and strategic planning'*.

From the perspective of the TAP, the strategic and operational plans seem well aligned in principle; it is in practice that there are issues. Too many possible disruptions, e.g., in filling posts, can stand in the way of achieving operational planning objectives. Even while the staff are working hard at the necessary actions, it may not be possible to achieve targets on all the fronts of development required at the same time. The 'Dashboard' reports to Council ensure that the University's senior body is aware of these issues, and this process of regular review is to be commended.

It is clear to the TAP that a good strategic plan that articulates well with an operational plan is, nonetheless, not leading to the required action in a timely manner. We were struck by the number of senior staff who told us that they had many staffing vacancies, either because of the slowness of filling posts or because they were uncertain of the skills needs given the proposed changes in the institution. Whilst many staff were keen to move forward, time and time again the issue of harmonisation of Terms and Conditions of service, and populating of approved structures arose.

Commendation 6

The TAP commends Unisa for having clear strategic and operational plans which reflect the mission and vision of the University and with clearly allocated responsibilities at senior management level for implementation, monitoring and responsive action. It also commends the establishment of performance contracts which play a pivotal role in the management of the operational plan.

Commendation 7

The TAP congratulates the University on its Dashboard: 2015 report to Council on the progress of the targets in the strategic plan and the equivalent process for the operational plan.

Recommendation 9

The University should review its operational planning for 2008 – making sure that all priorities identified can be delivered and setting out those actions that are critical, ensuring that human and financial resources are focussed on achieving the targets in those areas and that line managers are totally involved and committed to achieving the required outcomes.

5.2 Governance

We were unclear about the role of Senate and Senex in driving through change. Our meeting with Council members demonstrated that they were very aware of the main issues facing the University. However, there was less clarity with regard to how Senate, as Senate, exercises its delegated powers, and we were unable to see minutes of the meetings of Senate as requested. Furthermore, for their part, the committees of Senate appear to act as receiving committees with no overt policy advisory role. In the light of the apparent performance of certain Senate sub-committees, the ability of Senate to effectively monitor the University's academic standards with regard to research and teaching must be a matter of concern to

Senate and Council (see also page 57). We were also unclear as to the extent the Senior Management Team act and *were seen* to act together as a leadership team.

The TAP was not clear about the terms of reference of the Senate Tuition Committee (STC), and the Committee members themselves seemed uncertain. Although the Quality Assurance Committee had advised the TAP about the key role of STC in maintaining the quality of teaching and learner support at the University, STC members suggested that the Customer Care Committee and College Learner Support Sub-committees deal with issues such as complaints from students. STC in principle ensures that academics are available for helping students, but this is devolved to, and managed by, the Colleges. This division of labour, with the Committee fixing the policy, and managers implementing and managing the policy is satisfactory, but there should be a feedback loop on academic Quality Assurance matters to the Committee to enable it to ensure its policies are being implemented properly.

It is interesting to note that STC accepts academic support and learner support as two distinct activities to be kept apart, while at the operational level some Colleges have merged them. One important pilot (actually the first phase of implementation) in which STC is involved relates to the consequences of the ‘managed admissions’ on the requirements for related and enhanced learner support. The Learner Support Committee has also been discussing this issue. It is not clear to the TAP which committee and which individuals are formally responsible for ensuring that managed admissions take place across the whole undergraduate provision.

The TAP had some difficulty in understanding the terminology employed in the tuition area. We now understand that Unisa uses the term ‘tuition model’ to describe what the TAP recognises as the ‘delivery model’, or, put simply the ‘academic session/period’; whereas the terms ‘tuition’, ‘tutoring’ or ‘academic counselling’ are used in other institutions to describe the process of interaction between staff and students.

Commendation 8

The STC is commended for its efforts in working for positive changes in the teaching and learning transaction at Unisa; viz, implementation of a uniform delivery model at least for the undergraduate level, implementation of the ‘managed admission/registrations’ policy and the promotion of alternative approaches to learner support.

Recommendation 10

Unisa has an over-complex committee structure. The University may wish to consider implementing a review of its governance structure with the aim of reducing the number of committees and clarifying and simplifying decision-making processes. For example, consideration could be given to merging the Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committees given their joint responsibilities for providing overall support to learners. The TAP was concerned about the ability of Senate to effectively monitor the University's academic standards with regard to research and teaching and suggests the role and modus operandi of Senate is reviewed as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 11

It might be helpful in the future for Unisa to use the contemporary terminology used in ODL operations and literature, substituting delivery model for tuition and using tuition for the process of interacting with students.

5.3 Resource allocation

On the issue of the articulation of policy development with resource allocation and management, we identified a major issue.

We think it may be unhelpful for Senate to agree to new policies without being assured that the resources - human and financial - are available to implement the policy in a timely manner (e.g., Work Integrated Learning policy). If a new policy is expected to be undertaken from within existing resources, then those responsible for implementing the policy should sign up to deliver the staffing resource by shifting the priorities of existing staff. If additional resources are voted to implement the new policy, the timing of its introduction should take note of the time required to appoint and induct new staff. Of course in some cases the introduction of a new policy will lead to savings and therefore redundancy or redeployment issues need to be identified when policy is approved.

Recommendation 12

The forthcoming policy proposal for managed open admissions should be fully costed before it is put to Senate. Senate should not discuss the details of the resources necessary but should assure itself that they are adequate for the task at hand.

5.4 Issues relating to staffing and management

Throughout the audit, the TAP came across much good practice, with there being many opportunities for staff to undergo various kinds of development and training, e.g., diversity training. However, such training was always voluntary in nature. Whilst accepting the ideals of academic freedom, the TAP believes that this should apply to research and teaching in the sense of academics being able to think and say things which may be controversial. It should not be taken to imply that academics can ignore institutional imperatives on the grounds that they have ‘academic freedom’ to operate in a manner of choice. We believe there are major managerial issues here that need to be addressed in order for the institution to move forward.

The collective of the Colleges forms one of the powerhouses of the University, the others being the operational areas and learner support. There is much to commend in the way Colleges operate and in the leadership role of Deans and Heads of Schools and Departments. There is, however, lack of clarity about the precise devolved powers of Colleges, and we were unable to trace any documentation that spelt out exactly what Deans were responsible and accountable for. Deans told us that ‘*accountability has been devolved in performance contracts, but the power to execute responsibilities has not*’.

Recommendation 13

There should be a clear statement on the devolved powers of Colleges, which includes responsibilities, accountabilities and clear requirements for reporting.

We recognise that issues of transformation and equity require management at the university level, but care must be taken to ensure that these requirements do not slow down appointment processes too much. At present, many posts are unfilled, often because of the

cumbersome process of all posts being under the control of HR and many having to be approved by Senex, HRCOC and Council.

Recommendation 14

Post release should be devolved to Heads of Units who would be responsible for reporting frequently to HR on the patterns of new appointments.

5.5 Quality Assurance mechanisms and processes

It has been a major task to take Quality Assurance (QA processes) from the three former institutions and start to bring them together, or to create processes where there were none. In addition to the Unisa Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), the University has Quality Assurance committees in its colleges and departments, which report to QAC. All of them together constitute the Unisa Quality Assurance network. The Committee has had some staffing problems on account of pending ‘harmonisation’ and its activities to date have been focussed on the demands of the trial audit. As the Quality Assurance Policy has only just been approved, the QAC cannot be optimally functional.

In our discussions, it appeared that there are grey areas in operational terms. In the documentation, it is claimed that QAC is ‘*the custodian of all Quality Assurance activities at Unisa*’, while we were told that the Committee ‘*just has oversight*’, but no ‘*direct role*’ in Quality Assurance. Also, the nature of articulation between the Senate and QAC is not clear at this stage. However, there are commendable Quality Assurance exercises taking place within the University such as the departmental self-evaluation activities.

The overall impression is that the fully integrated Quality Assurance operations and also those of QAC will emerge only after the related policy is implemented, the related processes in the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Promotion and the Office of Academic Planner are linked and the envisaged integrated performance management is implemented.

We were particularly impressed by the work being done to identify ‘at risk’ subjects and to undertake reviews to ensure that these courses were improved, but again we were not totally clear where the responsibility lay.

Here is an audit trail/case study of the role of the Learner Support Committee in considering this key issue taken from the minutes of its meetings:

06/02/2006 HIGH-RISK SUBJECT PROJECT

Background: The project was in its last phase. To date, nineteen interviews had been completed and the relevant information would be available before the end of the year. The final report on the high-risk subject project would be compiled by X and would be submitted to the next Senate Learner Support Committee meeting. X reported that, as regards the 25 to 30 modules identified as high-risk subjects, only 10 lecturers had responded and that these lecturers had been interviewed. Another attempt would however be made to contact the other lecturers to set up interviews with them. A number of issues had arisen from the interviews held with lecturers, among others that there had been an impact on the subjects identified as high-risk subjects where the approach had been changed. The problem was identified as being one of a systematic nature and not involving the individual lecturers. The lecturers had been alerted to all the learner support services available to them.

08/05/2006 HIGH-RISK SUBJECT PROJECT

Background: The final report on the high-risk subject project would be compiled by X and would be submitted to the next Senate Learner Support Committee meeting. The work was in progress.

10/07/2006	No mention (apart form correction of spelling of an individual's name)
18/09/2006	No mention

This short trail, taken at random, may shed some light on the difficulties inherent in the committee structure. The issue of the important work in relation to 'high risk subjects' apparently disappeared off the Learning Support Committee agenda. However, no doubt it was followed through in the Tuition Committee. The other point of interest here is the lack of response of academic staff to the issues raised. This must be of great concern as teaching and learning are the core academic responsibilities in an ODL institution.

Commendation 9

The TAP commends Unisa for having taken steps to develop a network of QA mechanisms and locations to institutionalise Quality Assurance operations at all the relevant levels of the University. The TAP views the massive work done in connection with the Trial Audit and the Trial Audit itself as ample evidence for what is expected to come.

6.0 Teaching and learning

6.1 The arrangements for the Quality Assurance of and support for teaching and learning to enhance quality and allow for its continuous monitoring

There is clearly much individual and small group excellence and innovation, and many staff are to be commended on their commitment to students. An excellent new course approval system is now being developed, which will lock systems to ensure adherence to University policies (e.g. maximum number of modules to be studied at one time). This system is designed to ensure that the PQM is adhered to, reduce the number of modules on offer and ensure that all proposals for new modules are linked to a qualification, including the BA (general). We understand that it should also prevent students from taking on large numbers of modules when they are ill-prepared for the commitment required.

Commendation 10

The TAP commends the work of the Academic Planning Office for its role in developing processes for and controlling the number and relevance of courses in the new Unisa.

Commendation 11

The recent establishment of Quality Assurance committees in the colleges, reporting to the University QAC, is to be commended even though the system has not yet had time to become fully established.

6.2 Course design and materials production

6.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTE OF CURRICULUM AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT (ICLD)

The ICLD makes pedagogic inputs in the study materials prepared by the academics and also provides training in curriculum development, instructional design, Quality Assurance, evaluation of materials, research methodology, etc. On all accounts, it is doing an excellent job. It is interesting to note that it is located within the Learner Support Portfolio. As a result, it is claimed that academics see the role of ICLD as *just an add-on*, which, in turn, impacts its effectiveness and also efficiency, as it may remain uninformed about various crucial academic decisions pertaining to curricula.

The TAP observed serious inefficiencies in the way in which courses are produced, and it is very clear that the University needs to move towards one common approach to teaching.

6.2.2 CURRICULUM DESIGN OF UNISA STUDY MATERIALS.

We understand that different Colleges/Departments use different approaches and, though there are approved guidelines regarding curricular design and house style, we understand they are not followed uniformly by all the academics. Although not the direct responsibility of the Colleges (rather the lack of a university-wide system that oversees the progress of individual students), it is unacceptable that some students can be registered for up to 80 hours study per week.

In discussion, ICLD staff raised the issue of the lack of general oversight of learner progress, pointing out that if students want advice when they get stuck somewhere in their studies, they have nowhere to go, as there is no systematic process of support. The University Contact Centre does its best, but is grossly overloaded and some lecturers may not be easily available. (Access by e-mail would improve this situation and could be monitored more effectively.) There is some support arranged at Regional Centres, but that is not proactive, because the institution has no systems to allow this. In a modern ODL institution, all students should automatically be provided with an e-mail address. We return to this issue of the oversight of learner progress in Section 6.9.4.

It is heartening that ICLD undertakes systemic institutional research, which it uses to inform the design of study materials.

The TAP received contradictory information about the inclusion of contributions to course development within the academic promotion criteria. We believe this is an important quality issue in relation to teaching and learning and strongly believe it should be included. In our view, this should be part of the promotions criteria on a par with research.

*** Commendation 12**

The TAP commends the crucial and proactive role ICLD is playing in making the pedagogic profile/face (the study materials) of Unisa presentable and usable. It is an excellent service to staff and students at Unisa.

Recommendation 15

Unisa should consider re-locating the ICLD into the Academic and Research Portfolio (Vice-Principal (Academic and Research)) as soon as possible.

Recommendation 16

All students of Unisa should be provided with a Unisa e-mail address.

Recommendation 17

Achievements in the writing of high quality courses/modules (with external refereeing) should become part of the academic promotion criteria and carry as much weight as research.

Recommendation 18

Ways need to be found to implement the policy of working on a single house style for study materials across colleges/departments/institutions for at least the undergraduate level.

6.3 Tutorial letters and formative assessment

There is much good practice in relation to the above activities and that of tutorial letters appears to be implemented across much of the University. We did not have time to look at many letters, but those we examined were very helpful to the student.

The University's policy for assessment is clear and helpful, but the current model of academic staff trying to provide feedback to hundreds of students is clearly unsustainable and, in many cases, providing a poor service to students. In addition, such loads of students may be a factor in the problem Unisa has in retaining academic staff. Academic staff in ODL should be able to focus on the production of excellent course materials, preferably for quality enhancement in small teams and on their research, and especially on evaluation studies of their courses. It is very helpful for an academic to teach a small group of students so that she/he can see firsthand how students respond to the materials and assessment, but the current position where some lecturers have responsibility for 750 students is not a quality system and in our view is unsustainable. We understand some large courses have had to resort to computer-based assessment, which can be very helpful, provided that up-to-date software is used to provide students with good quality feedback.

We do understand the problems facing Unisa, in that it has advertised in some areas for adjunct faculty (tutor/markers) to mark assignments as well as to provide face-to-face tutorial support, with very little take up. Appointing a large number of such staff to mark assignments and to provide feedback brings with it its own complexity and expense. They have to be appointed, inducted, trained, developed and managed, and this raises a range of further issues in such a large institution.

Recommendation 19

A thorough review of the teaching model of Unisa should be undertaken, bringing in external expertise as appropriate, and the development of electronic assignments and online group and individual support should be accorded high priority.

Recommendation 20

The portal myUnisa should be developed for pedagogical purposes as quickly as possible. Unisa should consider the extent to which its future strategy, at least for learner support and teaching support (rather than the delivery of content), will depend on information technology (IT). The digital divide should be noted, but should not prevent Unisa from moving forward. After all, only a small percentage of students can manage to attend face-to-face tutorials at present.

6.4 The role of tutors

Tutors offer face-to-face group support in a range of locations across South Africa. They are appointed, inducted and developed by regional staff in conjunction with academic staff in the Colleges. Their role is to provide help in understanding the course materials to groups of students in particular locations rather than to introduce new material or their own approaches to teaching a subject. This is an *optional extra* for those students who are able to attend. There seems to be little or no contact between these tutors and academics at the central campus, little training and little supervision. We were told that tutors can be under enormous pressure to lecture because of the inadequacy of some of the course material. We were not aware of any systematic approach to collecting feedback from students on the value of these tutorial sessions although we are aware that there are calls for more face-to-face teaching. We were also not aware of any systematic staff development or programme or activity for all tutors, which might be best undertaken partially online.

Recommendation 21

Unisa should review and streamline its approach to tutoring and develop online training materials to support tutors in the process of tutoring, devolving more and clearer responsibility to Regional Directors for the provision of this service, within central policy guidelines provided by the University.

Recommendation 22

There should be a process of systematic feedback from students on their tutorial experience.

6.5 Advice, guidance and counselling

6.5.1 COUNSELLING AND CAREER GUIDANCE

The Bureau for Counselling, Career and Academic Development has qualified counsellors and interns available to provide support during registration and throughout the year. Its purpose is to align with the strategic objective to *'establish service-oriented, technology-enhanced learner support to increase retention and throughput'*. The Counselling division is based on the Unisa main campus and the Academic Development Division at the Florida campus. There are also staff based in the regions. The Bureau has a number of processes and projects that give life to its mission.

We were impressed by a dedicated, knowledgeable and committed team with solid leadership. There are staff and skills shortages in the Bureau that should be addressed as soon as possible. With the growing use of *myUnisa* and related technologies, there is a need for specialist skills such as e-counselling. Given the research mandate, specialised research skills are also needed. ODL creates special challenges in this area, so the Bureau provides for a number of mechanisms of providing support, including face-to-face contact, e-mail and telephone support. It has not considered the potential of using facilities such as *myUnisa* to create virtual social spaces that reduce the isolation inherent in being a distance student. Given the fact that half of Unisa's students have access to *myUnisa*, social networking spaces could be developed in order to provide for a more enriching community for distance students. Some Unisa students are already forming their own social network spaces using technologies such as Facebook, which has over 600 Unisa students on it. One Unisa class even registered itself on a server at another university to use social networking components of the software, so there is undoubtedly a growing demand among students.

The Academic Literacies project, which should probably be a core intervention rather than a project, has been slow to get going. This project is meant to help develop language, numeracy and information literacies. This is a vital intervention if Unisa is to achieve its ODL mission.

Commendation 13

Unisa is to be commended for the establishment of the Bureau for Counselling, Career and Academic Development, and for staffing it with committed people who see and accept the vision of the University. The Bureau is a vital component of achieving the goals of ODL.

Recommendation 23

Unisa should consider making better use of social networking technologies to reduce the isolation of its distance students. This should also include the acquisition of skills by Unisa in e-counselling. Professional resources also need to be available in the regions. The Bureau must play a vital role in the business analysis that leads to the design of a Unisa tracking or profiling system, as it should be a key component of the interventions that such a system should produce. Academic counselling should also be addressed by the academic staff, who should be in direct contact with students through myUnisa and other avenues (telephone, SMS, e-mail etc.).

6.5.2 SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A new unit for working with students with disabilities has been established under a passionate and capable leader. The unit has not been in existence for long enough to have a comprehensive portfolio of achievements. However, the TAP was very impressed by the competence and commitment of the relatively small team, and it believes that, with this team, Unisa is on the right track. A policy on students with disabilities is in progress and needs to be approved as soon as possible. The team faces particular challenges in meeting the needs of students in regions and remote areas, something that it is planning to address.

Commendation 14

Unisa is to be commended for setting up the Advocacy and Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities and for staffing it, in part, with people who are themselves people with disabilities and all of whom are deeply committed to improving the experience of Unisa students with special needs.

6.6 Academic support services

6.6.1 LIBRARY SERVICES

The Unisa Library is a component of Learner Support at the University. It has effective arrangements in place for the main responsibility of issuing books and photocopied materials to students over distances by mail; Unisa pays postage to deliver books and students pay to return them. In providing such services to students, special attention is paid to the issue of ‘equity’. Overall, students are supported in three different ways:

- by the provision of extensive and prompt services at the campus (and this is becoming more and more difficult every day, as the number of students visiting the Library is increasing rapidly),
- by providing services regionally, and
- by promoting ICT applications to provide timely and up-to-date services.

In addition, the Library provides academic support to the faculty locally for the preparation of study materials as well as research work.

Further, it has international inter-library loan arrangements for serving students within and outside South Africa. To boost the status and efficiency of its services, it follows international guidelines to support Unisa ODL operations. It is to the credit of the Unisa Library that the African Digital Library is housed at the University, and every attempt should be made to extend its collection to include African texts from the continent and the diaspora. The Library has developed training modules to provide library orientation and information literacy to users, including the digital aspects of library provision. It has built collaborative partnerships with public and community libraries to extend its reach and services.

The Library has made an effort to innovate in the provision of services and materials. It also has a collection of materials that are adequately aimed at the kinds of programme that Unisa offers. The Library is used extensively and there are multiple copies of textbooks that can be borrowed for up to one month. Journals can be ordered online and those sampled were up-to-

date. Some students do not understand the nature of ODL and some do not have alternative spaces to study. Therefore, they use the Library as a study space, creating a demand that the Library is not designed to handle. Although the Sunnyside campus provides study space, students still prefer to come up to the main campus in Pretoria, leaving the Sunnyside campus under-used and the Library severely crowded. There are a number of reasons for this, with one perhaps being the Sunnyside campus not being designed as study space (it is mostly made up of lecture space).

The Library makes efforts to meet the HEQC criteria 4, but the system-wide lack of understanding of ODL referred to elsewhere in this report impedes complete success.



Commendation 15

The Library is to be commended for the enthusiasm and commitment of staff to providing equitable services to the large variety of Unisa students, efforts to build profitable collaborations and to mobilise relevant ICT applications, and efforts to bridge the digital divide by providing training in the use of technology for students to benefit from the e-component of the Library. For example, it has provided reference materials for distance learning as well as electronic references, and developed information literacy courses.

Recommendation 24

Unisa should rationalise its library services by reducing/eliminating undergraduate student visits to the library and the University should provide study spaces that are designed for purpose in order to help reduce the load on the Library.

Recommendation 25

As an essential component of the study materials sent to students, Unisa should provide 'Readings' to reduce the ever growing physical pressure on the Library, allowing it to devote its resources and time to improve its technology-enhanced services.

6.6.2 SUPPLY OF LEARNING AND OTHER RESOURCES TO STUDENTS

The TAP examined the processes involved in:

- Materials production,
- Printed materials production,
- Audio visual production, and
- Despatch of materials.

The volume of materials produced and dispatched is enormous, with approximately 700 million pages produced in 2005. The teaching and learning process of Unisa is completely dependent on the smooth operation of this process at present. The staff responsible for printed materials production are to be commended for keeping Unisa operating despite the fact that volumes have exceeded the reasonable capacity of the facilities.

In the printing area, the facilities are crowded, the ceilings are too low and the packing density of people, equipment and supplies appears to be a major risk to effective working, including potential negative health and safety impacts. This crowding impacts negatively on the production, storage and distribution of printed materials. It is unlikely that the facilities could cope with **any** further increase in demand. We are concerned that this process is negatively affected by delays in the arrival of materials for printing. There are limited print-on-demand facilities, which could alleviate some of the bottlenecks in the current system, but probably not on the scale needed.

The Sound, Video and Photography section is in the process of converting from analogue to digital. It has ample space, since digital facilities require less space than analogue. However, the space could do with some refreshing to create a more stimulating work environment. Other than this, the procedures seem to be effective and efficient. Being digital, the turnaround time on materials is much shorter.

The Despatch section is also overcrowded and has procedures that are not optimised, in part because of the space configuration. The materials collection counter is cramped and does not convey an image of quality that one would expect of an institution of Unisa's aspirations. There is only a single loading bay, resulting in a bottleneck in the dispatch of large shipments. According to the HEQC Criterion 3, the printing and despatch services do not adequately support teaching and learning at the scale on which Unisa is operating.

Recommendation 26

Unisa should consider moving the printed materials production, and possibly despatch as well, to a more convenient location. Such a location could be warehouse-based. This should also include the development of an efficient technologically enhanced architecture for these mission-critical business processes. The potential of on-demand printing should be further explored.

6.6.3 ONLINE SERVICES THROUGH myUNISA

The portal *myUnisa* represents Unisa's wish to use web-based technologies for a number of mainly administrative purposes, including providing alternative vehicles for the delivery of learning materials, assessment methods and tutorial letters. As a first step, it is indeed impressive, with close to half of all students having some access to the system and up to 100% in some courses and programmes. However, there is very little uptake of *myUnisa* by academic staff and almost no pedagogical use of the system. There is no policy that requires academic staff to interact with students through *myUnisa* or to make pedagogical use of the system. There is no incorporation of e-learning (pedagogical use of *myUnisa*) as a criterion for academic promotion. There is also no direct link between the assignment system and *myUnisa*.

*** Commendation 16**

The IT team is to be commended for the myUnisa initiative. What has been achieved, and the scale of those achievements, is astounding. Students have an opportunity for engagement with the University and each other through technology, and the uptake suggests that there is a demand that exceeds the expectations of the academic staff.

Recommendation 27

In view of the fact that Unisa sees itself as a leading ODL institution, it should establish an effective policy and implementation mechanism obliging all academic staff to integrate the pedagogical application of myUnisa into their teaching, while at the same time taking into

consideration those students who are unable to get online. Anything that can be done online should be done online; for example the grading and feedback on submitted assignments. Engagement through myUnisa should be incorporated into promotion criteria. Better connection needs to be made between myUnisa and the assignment system, as well as other systems such as videoconferencing and satellite broadcasting. Social networking functionality should be implemented on myUnisa as it can help alleviate the sense of isolation that students in distance learning experience (see the section on Counselling).

6.6.4 DIGITAL LEARNER SUPPORT

The Directorate: Digital Learner Support (DLS) is responsible for the deployment, administration and overall management of the Telematic interventions and technologies at Unisa. The University makes effective use of both satellite broadcasting and videoconferencing to provide for lectures and group work. There is good integration with the production and despatch services, where content is also distributed on DVD. Unisa is also continuing its relationship with multi-purpose computer telecentres, which are vital for this kind of delivery.

Much of what is done using the expensive satellite systems could in fact be done using alternative, lower cost technologies. Remaining focused mainly on satellite technology may mean that important opportunities for improved access are missed. For example, lectures could be distributed on DVD or CD, and integrated with an online system such as *myUnisa*, thus alleviating the bandwidth constraints. Back and front channel process could be used to take care of the real time communication needs. This would be more in line with an ODL model as it would not require students to visit highly limiting facilities.

In the case of videoconferencing, there should be more opportunities to interface with *myUnisa*, especially in creating a back channel and making available a recording of the sessions as is currently being explored. Both systems could integrate better with *myUnisa*, helping to modernise these processes and align them better with an ODL philosophy.

SMS technologies can also be employed to improve contact with students and enhance the student experience including reducing their isolation and should be integrated with *myUnisa* for this purpose.

✱ **Commendation 17**

Unisa is to be commended for its effective processes that use satellite and videoconferencing technologies, which reach out to students via regional and associated facilities and that can easily be adapted for alternative means of delivery.

Recommendation 28

Better integration should be achieved between myUnisa and these initiatives, including scheduling and making available the recorded lectures and video conferences, recognising the constraints on bandwidth that currently exist. Newer and cheaper alternatives to satellite broadcasting should be explored in relation to ODL philosophy. In addition, SMS technologies should be integrated with myUnisa to help improve the student experience.

6.6.5 CONTACT MANAGEMENT (CONTACT CENTRE)

The University Contact Centre (UCC) is often the first point of contact between Unisa and prospective students, and in the ODL context renders a vitally important service to Unisa students. It is a relatively new initiative that came about in part as a result of the merger, and is based on the Florida campus. It has had some teething problems, as are to be expected given the scale of the new Unisa and the complexities of the merger. For example, the UCC had to handle more than double the number of calls that were expected during peak periods. There is also a problem of weak alignment of the business units upon which the UCC depends. There are also gaps in skills, number of staff and certain other elements of workflow. Some views of the UCC among other Unisa staff seem to be based on incorrect information, for example, calls being forwarded directly to academic staff. One important area is that not all Unisa publications provide the number for the UCC, so there are still too many people calling business units directly.

The UCC is in the process of improving its processes, increasing its staff, closing the skills gap and seeking ISO 9000 accreditation. However, there are certain things that Unisa could do at the level of the institution as a whole, as noted in the Recommendations.

Commendation 18

Unisa is to be commended for the important service provided through the UCC. We have reason to believe that the teething problems are transitory and that the Contact Centre is a major asset to the University. In an ODL context, this is a vital initiative.

Recommendation 29

The teething problems experienced by the UCC must be solved before the HEQC audit or it will be a risk to Unisa. We believe that this will be the case, but it should be monitored by senior management. Special attention needs to be given to better alignment between the UCC and the business that it supports. Contact information on all Unisa publications should give the UCC number, rather than the business unit directly. The role of the UCC should be better publicised within Unisa. It should be kept in mind that this Centre represents a primary interface for students and the public, and therefore forms the public perception of the institution, so the quality of this service must be excellent.

6.7 Short Learning Programme

The Short Learning Programme appears to function effectively and the policy which was approved by Council on 29/07/2005 is a comprehensive and quite complex document. The purpose of this programme is to enhance learning opportunities in the non-formal curriculum. Courses are developed by individual members of staff for niche markets after market research has taken place. Contribution to the Short Learning Programme is voluntary for academics who share some of the profits if courses generate income. It was not clear to the TAP what happened if courses incurred financial loss. Recently, a new Directorate was established to oversee the management of the Short Learning Programme in the University. This is to be welcomed.

Section 5 of the Portfolio sets out the current processes for the development of these programmes and for their approval. However, the TAP was not clear exactly how courses are approved by the University. Section 5.4 of the Portfolio and the Short Learning Programme

terms of reference and approval routes indicate a multiplicity of committees and individuals involved in approval and evaluation. Section 5.6 of the Portfolio indicates real concerns about the processes of Quality Assurance in this area, and the TAP fully supports the proposals made in this section.

At present, the Short Learning Programme curriculum is built up from initiatives of individual members of staff taking their ideas and evidence of a 'market' through an approval process. Much of the teaching on short courses seems to be face-to-face. Two issues arise:

- is it sensible that an ODL institution should be putting time and effort into programmes which do not use ODL methodology?
- there should be a University plan for the future of the Short Learning Programme (allowing for flexibility to respond to changing demand from employers).

The TAP was unclear why the University does not allow the official University Coat of Arms to be printed on the Certificates in this area and can only assume it is because management is either not convinced that the Quality Assurance processes in these areas are operating effectively or because the methods used to develop the courses in this programme do not fall within the framework of the University Statutes.

Commendation 19

The TAP commends the process by which the Short Learning Programme course approval requires market research and employer liaison.

Recommendation 30

The Quality Assurance processes relating to the short course area should be reviewed as soon as possible, and the size and shape of the short course curriculum should be determined by the University as a conscious policy rather than leaving it to the current ad hoc processes. Course approvals must be informed by management information about the staffing and systems capacities, to deliver such a programme in relation to the core ODL business of the University.

6.8 Learner records and certification

This is a complex area, and Section 6.2 of the *Portfolio* documents the procedures by which student grades and student examination marks are captured and recorded. It appears to the TAP that the security of these processes is satisfactory, although time did not permit a thorough investigation of the following issues:

- The details of the IT systems used in the storage of the captured assessment records.
- The processes leading up to data entry into an electronic system.
- The safeguarding of certificates and the Unisa Coat of Arms.
- The process by which a Unisa Certificate can be verified by an employer.

As mentioned in Short Learning Programme on page 44, it appears that the Short Learning Programme Certificates, because they do not include the Unisa Coat of Arms, are extremely easy to photocopy. This is a major security issue and should be remedied quickly. The problem for the administration of Unisa's collection of formative assessment data is that it is still mainly manual. The TAP was told that the business model was developed for around 80-90 thousand students.

Recommendation 31

Short Learning Certificates should be made more secure and less easy to photocopy.

Recommendation 32

Electronic systems for the handling of formative assessment should be introduced as soon as possible and the manual scanning process for handling examination scripts should be updated as soon as possible.

6.9 The administration of academic programmes, the role of the regions, work integrated learning (WIL), management information systems (MIS) and the identification of 'at risk' students

6.9.1 THE ROLE OF DEANS, HEADS OF SCHOOLS AND DEPARTMENTS

The TAP was impressed by the way these senior academic staff fulfilled their responsibilities for the management of academic programmes and the way they worked together as a team across Colleges. The TAP was encouraged by the willingness of Deans and other senior staff in the Colleges to accept the need for the implementation of university-wide policies for many processes. We have already commented on the work of the Academic Planning Office. It is critical for Unisa to have a plan for the 'shape and size of the curriculum' over the next period and this must be co-ordinated at a university level. We have seen evidence of real initiatives, from the Vice Chancellor through to Heads of Departments, to get to grips with the issue of reducing the numbers of modules on offer. This is a particular problem for the School of Human Sciences, which offers a wide range of modules that do not attract students in viable numbers.

The delivery model was variously understood by members of the TAP, but the Academic Planning Office is now moving to enforce common and articulated delivery models for courses and modules. This will reduce complexity for the institution and introduce clarity for the student.

6.9.2 THE ROLE OF THE REGIONS

The role and responsibilities of regions are well described in the Portfolio. In discussion with Regional Directors, we identified issues that are common in organisations with regional structures. As one Regional Director put it '*there has to be an understanding that the regions are an integral part of the institution, and not just an afterthought*'. Regional Directors have a major responsibility as ambassadors for Unisa and understand more about the needs of students in their region than anyone else in the system. It is clear that different approaches to learner support may be necessary in different regions depending on local circumstances. In the view of Regional Directors, there is some resistance to the new decentralisation model despite the development of Service Level Agreements. The TAP was not clear how the collective voice of the regions is made known to key areas at the centre on a regular basis.

As the University's ICT systems develop, the relationship between the regions and the centre will change and therefore the roles and responsibilities need to be regularly reviewed. What is important, however, is that regional staff should have access to information on student progress including the tracking of assignments.

Commendation 20

The TAP commends Unisa for setting up a regional structure and for the clear description of the responsibilities of regions as set out in the Portfolio. It considers a regional structure to be a major component of a quality distance education system in a country as large as South Africa.

Recommendation 33

A formal system should be put in place to ensure that the collective view of the regions is fed back regularly to the appropriate central departments.

6.9.3 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

In the case of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), we were concerned that, although Unisa had agreed to a policy and a budget had been developed, there was lack of clarity about resource allocation to implement the policy. Work-integrated or work-based learning is an important element of a comprehensive university, but it has some intrinsic elements which make it quite complex to manage in a distance teaching university. We met the staff involved in the Health Studies programme, in Correctional Sciences and others as well as the Director of Work-Integrated Learning.

Some of the programmes are very well organised, but there is lack of clarity regarding the overall responsibilities for WIL and, in particular, the role of the regions in supporting students to find placements and reporting to the Centre. Again, this seems an area where some tough decisions may need to be taken. We were told that some 30,000 students are following courses with some degree of work integration. We believe that Unisa may be more able to ensure the quality of its provision if it focuses on a number of key programmes with large numbers of students that have an essential work related component and phases out programmes that do not come into this category. We understand that the CHE provides funding for WIL courses in some areas and not in others. Unisa should consider whether to

continue with expensive WIL programmes that are not supported by the CHE. There also needs to be more clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the regions in this respect and more clarity regarding the use of resources.

Commendation 21

We commend the work of those programmes (e.g. Health Studies and Correctional Services), which are well organised and provide a significant contribution to the needs of South Africa.

Recommendation 34

Unisa should further review its WIL programmes and consider their size and shape. It should also be clearer about its own responsibilities for helping students to find placements. If regions are expected to play a major role here, then they should be resourced to do so.

6.9.4 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

This is an emerging area and the post of Executive Director: Information and Strategic Analysis was established as recently as 2005. Clearly, this is an important area and the relationship between this Department and ICT is crucial. Although there are many problems in capturing information about students' progress, a high-level survey of student satisfaction has been conducted. However, it was not clear to us what action resulted from this survey.

We were impressed by the work of this Department and examined some of the reports and documentation provided to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Chair of the Exam Review Group and Senex. This documentation highlights the difficulties posed by the complexity of Unisa's provision. Data at Departmental, School and College levels is provided on the Intranet and includes comprehensive university-level information from 2000-2007 on student success, failure and attrition rates. It is clear that the Unisa management is treating student throughput as a very high priority and previously separate initiatives to improve retention and throughput have now been brought together in the 'Throughput Forum'.

We also noted that many presentations were made by staff of this Department to the Colleges and Schools. These served not only to inform staff regarding course and programme throughput rates but also raised the profile and importance of focussing on student success and achievement. In addition, in order to have clean and accurate data about the student body, ODL institutions need to have systems that can provide data about students' overall current performance and that highlight students who may be at risk of dropping out. In ODL,

there are well documented reasons for drop-out, and recent research does suggest that attempting too many courses and registering for courses in which students are not prepared are the most frequent.

It is very important, therefore, that tracking systems be developed. This is seen as a priority at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. One senior member of staff commented ‘*We need to start putting in place a policy on supervision and tracking system (of post-graduate students) to ensure that students are brought through the system*’. As far as we could tell, there is no system in place which tracks the progress of individual students and which can be used to make interventions by the University at particular times. We believe this is a great weakness in the University system. What is needed is for an individual member of staff to be able to call up an individual student record online, to be able to see the student’s overall study commitment with Unisa and their past records.

The TAP believes that effort should be directed to developing a system whereby those ‘at risk’ can be identified early in their first year, or even at application, and pro-active advice provided. We see the development of the managed admissions system for undergraduate students as a positive move in this direction.

Commendation 22

TAP commends Unisa for the establishment of the Throughput Forum and the Information and Strategic Analysis Unit with their focus on understanding the complex issues relating to student throughput in a complex university.

Recommendation 35

The University should develop a system, accessible to academic and academic support staff, which enables the tracking of the progress of individual students. It should also re-structure its learner support to employ staff whose prime responsibility is to track student progress and provide informed advice and guidance to individual students about their general progress within the University and who would be able to direct students to other sources of specialist help (e.g. careers advice).

6.10 Recruitment, selection, development and support procedures

This is one of the areas the TAP found needed most development.

6.10.1 RECRUITMENT

The TAP was told that it is difficult to recruit new staff and even more difficult to retain them. We were concerned to note examples of new staff joining the institution without any realisation of the core values and processes of an ODL institution. All recruitment documentation should make it quite clear that Unisa is a very special ODL institution. This applies particularly to academic staff.

Recommendation 36

All role and person specifications in recruitment documentation should make quite clear what is expected in an ODL institution with Unisa's mission.

6.10.2 SELECTION OF STAFF

The introduction of a 'fair selection' training policy for all those who are involved as Chairs of interview panels across the University is a significant contribution to quality. Such a programme will include how to raise issues of equity and equal opportunities with prospective candidates. We believe that successful completion of such a programme (it can be quite focussed and brief and can combine face-to-face with online activities) should be mandatory for all those chairing selection panels.

We have mentioned earlier our concerns that, in some cases, there may not be a competitive process for the appointment of contract staff, and we believe this is a weakness.

Commendation 23

The TAP commends the establishment of a 'fair selection' training programme for the Chairs of appointment panels

Recommendation 37

The fair selection programme should be made mandatory for all staff chairing appointment panels and the success of the programme reviewed on a regular basis

6.10.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT POLICIES

Although there were examples of good practice in some Colleges, we could not identify a university-wide programme for the induction and training of new staff. The ICLD does an excellent job and there is some excellent practice where academics and ICLD staff work closely together following the current policy. We suggest that all new academic staff be allocated a mentor and that documentation be developed to support the role of the mentor and the mentee.

We understand that the ICLD runs a course for new staff, but clearly with staff being engaged by the University on a rolling basis, a face-to face programme is not necessarily the best approach. We recommend the development of an ODL-based induction course for all new academic staff.

Commendation 24

We commend Unisa and ICLD for developing an induction programme for new academic staff.

Recommendation 38

Measures should be taken to ensure that formal, recorded induction is mandatory for all new academic staff (including new contract staff) and that completion of the programme (it need not be lengthy) is a necessary pre-requisite for completing probation.

Recommendation 39

A formal mentoring system should be introduced for all new staff.

6.11 Evaluation of programmes (including internal and external peer review)

6.11.1 EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW

Again the TAP saw evidence of very good practice, but it also noted that there was no common University system which was mandatory for all programmes and courses. For example, the use of external experts to comment on drafts of courses before being offered to students was patchy.

Recommendation 40

The use of external experts to comment on new course outlines and materials should be mandatory for all new courses.

6.11.2 STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSES.

Although the very valuable student satisfaction survey has now been run for the third consecutive year, with important enhancements, the TAP saw only very limited evidence of student feedback on course materials and tuition. Clearly, it would be a major task to develop a student feedback system for all courses, but new courses and new programmes should have student feedback in their first presentation. Such a system could ask students for their views on the clarity of the teaching, the value of the self-assessment, the relevance of the assessment questions, the quantity of material, the costs and availability of books (both those purchased and those available in libraries), the support they have received from the academics responsible for the courses and the quality of tutoring.

Recommendation 41

A student feedback system should be introduced for all new courses.

6.12 Assessment policy and clear and effective procedures for implementation

Unisa has a very clear and comprehensive assessment policy, which was approved by Council in September 2005. It stresses the importance of transparency such that the criteria by which the student's level of achievement is judged is made clear to the student. Assessment plans are encouraged to follow the minimum National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) target. The policy includes processes for outcomes-based learning and for the recognition of prior learning. Acknowledgement is made of the importance of continuous formative and summative assessments in ODL. The policy acknowledges assessment as a key driver of learning and the completion of assessment tasks is one good and clear measure of an *active* student.

In ODL, the importance of feedback to students cannot be over-emphasised, and generic feedback to all students must be supplemented by personalised and specific feedback. The TAP did not have much information on the speed at which students received feedback on their assignments nor of the quality of comments but was assured that the University has a standard for the turnaround of assignments by academics and hired markers. However, it was reported in discussions that the majority of some categories of academic staff were not as accessible as others and although they were present on the campus for the period 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., they regarded this as the only time they should be accessible to their students. This is compounded by stories of staff 'moonlighting' in the afternoons by teaching at other institutions in Pretoria.

If this is true and within University policy, then clearly the staff are not to be criticised but the University is no doubt aware of the ill-feeling that this can cause.

If there are delays in returning assignments, students may not receive feedback on one before they have to submit another. It ought to be possible to provide systematic and timely feedback on at least three substantial assignments on a 16-week module, providing the systems are working effectively.

Commendation 25

The TAP commends Unisa for its clear and comprehensive assessment policy.

Recommendation 42

Unisa should keep records of the return of assignments to students and the work of individual markers, whether full-time academics or markers hired for this purpose, monitored (in peer groups?) in terms of speed of return and of the quality of teaching comments.

6.13 Recognition of Prior Learning and credit transfer

The TAP was impressed by what it learnt about this area. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in an ODL institution poses a number of issues. It is labour intensive with its focus on the support to help individuals develop portfolios and the subsequent assessment of these portfolios. RPL is, however, a major access route for many. The systems involved are rigorous and the implementation plan (Table 50 of the Portfolio) is comprehensive and logical. Clearly, one of the constraints is the availability of academic staff to support the process of portfolio construction and assessment, and there is some concern about the delays in screening applications and assessing portfolios.

The TAP noted that portfolio workshops are held annually in various regions to assist candidates with compiling their portfolios and the special care taken to support students with disabilities. The TAP was not clear about the Quality Assurance processes in relation to RPL.

Commendation 26

The TAP commends the process of RPL in the institution and regards it as a major access route to many who may not have had previous formal academic training.

Commendation 27

The TAP commends the care taken to support students in developing their RPL portfolios.

Recommendation 43

The costs of RPL and the way in which students are supported need to be kept under review. Some ODL institutions offer distance courses to help RPL students construct portfolios. Unisa (as an ODL institution) may wish to consider limiting the areas in which it offers RPL to ensure that students registering receive a quality service.

Recommendation 44

Unisa should set out clearly the Quality Assurance processes applying to RPL.

7.0 Arrangements for Quality Assurance, development and monitoring of research

Unisa's research policy was approved by Council in April 2006, and the TAP is content that the research activity of the University reflects its mission as a comprehensive university.

There is very clear commitment at the College, institute and individual academic levels, although all groups commented on time constraints on developing international, worldwide class research performance. No group with whom we talked was aware of Unisa's research priorities in relation to its vision and mission, and the research policy does not set this out. Furthermore, all interviewees thought that the priority of academic research was subject-based and not the core pedagogy of the University, which is ODL.

There was much assertion of good practice in monitoring and the assurance of academic standards at College, School and Centre levels. The assertions will have to be justified. There was little evidence of cross-university integration or shared good practice.

The consensus of all groups with which we met was that the University's Senate Committee on Research (SENREC) and the Higher Degrees Committee showed little evidence of proactive policy development and acted more as receivers of reports than as committees with delegated power responsible for development, monitoring and maintenance of academic standards. The planning, policy and data reach is less than optimal, with little vertical and horizontal integration at operation and policy levels.

The following specific points were made by members of SENREC, but the TAP did not have the time to examine the level of resource available for research in any detail:

- Research at the University is not adequately resourced and effectively monitored.
- An effective research system that captures appropriate data for research-related planning needs to be established.
- Appropriate university-wide strategies for the monitoring of effective post-graduate supervision should be developed.
- University-wide regular review of the effectiveness of the QA of research functions and post-graduate education does not appear to be undertaken.
- Relegation of ODL research, the priority of the University, to a self-selected but Senate-approved Professional and Administrative Research Committee (PARC) may need to be re-thought.

Recommendation 45

Whilst all academic staff should engage in scholarship in their own discipline, we are not convinced that it is the right of every academic to undertake individual research. We recommend that the University establishes approved research groups in line with its mission and that all researchers are linked into such groups.

Recommendation 46

The Research Directorate is working well and its role, as the executive arm of the Senate Committee on Research, should be developed to provide strategic thinking on research across the institution.

Recommendation 47

Systemic research (i.e., research in ODL processes, products, outcomes, clientele, learning strategies, learner requirements, etc.) should be mainstreamed with obligatory contributions from academics and, (if possible, administrators).

8.0 Quality Assurance, development and monitoring of post-graduate education

We were impressed with post-graduate students who felt privileged to be students of Unisa no matter where they were. However, they too expressed their concerns about supervisory contact, lack of facilities and apparent neglect and long-drawn out silence on the part of supervisors.

Significant conflict was observed on the one hand between senior staff assertion of the consolidation of the recruitment of post-graduate students and at the same time the views of Colleges and research centres that they were obliged to accept all academically qualified students including international students. We were especially concerned at the lack of supervisory training in the context of ODL supervision of post-graduate work, with which the Higher Degrees Committee agrees. Blanket acceptance of post-graduate research students across all faculties irrespective of technological/field facilities is a matter of grave concern.

We are not convinced that clear institutional admission requirements and procedures exist. We think it would be of benefit to the University and its students to develop policies and procedures in the following areas:

- policies and regulations specifying responsibilities of supervisors of post-graduate research,
- procedures for students to lodge complaints or appeals that are swiftly dealt with,
- means of capturing essential information on post-graduate research issues through a centralised research information system,
- mandatory training and development opportunities for new supervisors, and
- facilities for regular access to supervisors and other researchers in the field.

Commendation 28

We commend the commitment of many individual staff to supporting post-graduate students.

Recommendation 48

There should be clear expectations regarding the role of internal supervisors for post-graduate students. Supervisors should be trained in the role, and students should be told how often their supervisor will contact them. Supervisors should be expected to take a proactive role.

Recommendation 49

The main mode of contact between supervisors and doctoral students should be online. Colloquia and seminars should be organised online for students who are unable to visit the campus at Muckleneuk.

9.0 Community engagement

There is a significant and varied amount of community engagement activity. More than any other area, however, this looked uncoordinated. Some activities are taking place which, even in the context of Unisa's unique and eclectic offerings, look quite out of place in a university. Other community work may not be known about.

Unisa may wish to think through the definition of its community/communities, especially in the context of its strategic vision and then develop a plan for establishing priorities in this area. In the 21st century, it is likely that universities will be increasingly judged by their value to the communities they serve.

Recommendation 50

With regard to “Community Engagement” as is acknowledged in the Portfolio, Unisa does not meet the HEQC criterion at present. It almost certainly needs to do less and plan more and be clearer about where the responsibility for coordinating Community Engagement lies. What is the link between the community developers in the Learner Support, the Alumni and Communications divisions? Even though CHE has not made specific recommendations at present, Unisa should develop its own policy as quickly as possible.

The first step would be to undertake a scoping study of all the activities currently regarded as Community Engagement and then think through what kind of engagement Unisa would like to maintain and develop in future. This may involve closing down some activities which are seen to be of vital importance by some individuals.

10.0 Benchmarking and surveys

10.1 Benchmarking

Unisa is a unique institution and as such benchmarking provides quite a challenge and as the Portfolio admits (Section 4.2, page 340) '*benchmarking is not well understood in the University*'. Individual staff members have good contacts with other providers and in one sense, informal benchmarking with the curricula of other institutions is an unspoken core element of the role of any academic. Benchmarking in relation to ODL is always difficult as the different environmental conditions influence ODL operations in a much more significant manner than in conventional institutions.

10.2 Surveys

Unisa has undertaken a major student satisfaction survey in 2005, 2006 and 2007. These surveys are now entrenched as an annual exercise. It is to be supplemented by a staff satisfaction survey from 2007. This is clearly an important element of Quality Assurance and systematic research, and must be built upon through sound planning. The TAP suggests that such a plan would include general student and staff satisfaction surveys conducted at regular intervals. Surveys of student views on new courses and courses which have high attrition rates should be systematised to inform and guide course development and course improvement processes.

It is critical to develop a longitudinal approach to such surveys such that trends can be identified and action taken.

Recommendation 51

A detailed University plan for all surveys should be developed, and all surveys should lead to follow-up work in which action plans are developed from the outcomes of the surveys and appropriately monitored.

11.0 The Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL)

The Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL) mission is to engage in a wide range of consultancy and ongoing research, together with a significant teaching component. However, it stresses that greater emphasis will be placed on research in its recruitment policies. Business schools in many universities claim to be special; to need better services from the university administration, to have 'better' terms and conditions of service and remuneration. This is very understandable if the school is bringing in substantial resources to the university through its dealings with business. In our discussions, colleagues from the SBL stressed the importance of professionalising examinations and having speedy turnaround of examination results. There was some discussion about the need for '*a quicker service delivery from Unisa...or we should be allowed to get our own service providers*'.

The TAP view is that all services to Unisa students should be efficient and speedy, and that special services should only be set up if the costs of such services are fully included in the fees charged to students and their sponsors. Although several SBL documents were provided in the Appendices, we did not have time to examine them in detail, but our impression from discussions was that this is a vibrant unit undertaking excellent work.12.0

12.0 International partnerships

The TAP was impressed by the care and attention to detail which manifests itself in the contracts with overseas institutions. Clearly, Unisa wishes to adhere to the imperatives of quality provision across borders, but there is some uncertainty amongst the TAP and amongst Unisa staff as to whether the monitoring of the quality arrangements and standards is adequate. The articulation between support services for international students needs to be strengthened, specifically in the registration, dispatch of materials and return of marked assignment areas.

There is clearly an awareness of the complex issues involved in working in partnership with another educational agency or institution outside South Africa. It was not clear to the TAP whether Unisa exercises control over the quality of learner support when programmes are offered in other countries either directly by Unisa or in partnership. For example, does Unisa concern itself with the quality of tutorials outside its own borders?

Unisa's ambition to become *the African University* depends entirely on the quality of its service to students. Currently, Unisa has a very high reputation in Africa among governments and education officials. It is not totally clear what its reputation is amongst students outside its borders. The development through *myUnisa* of electronic means of communication should be a priority especially when offering taught post-graduate programmes.

So there is a major issue with many questions unanswered. Are students outside South Africa included in the student satisfaction survey? What kinds of other surveys of Unisa's provision in other countries are planned? How speedily do students get their materials and their assignments returned? What are the arrangements for examinations and how are examinations procedures secured? These are just some of the questions which need further attention

Commendation 29

The TAP commends Unisa for the care with which the agreements with institutions in other countries are developed.

Recommendation 52

Unisa should pay particular attention to the Quality Assurance of the learner support processes for cross border students.

13.0 Note on Business Architecture

There are many business processes at Unisa that were developed to support a correspondence model of distance learning. Many of those processes are not fully aligned with an ODL model, do not take effective advantage of 21st century technologies, and are in need of changes. Furthermore, in common with many distance education institutions of this scale, the institution has many business processes that operate in silos, with very little connection between them, and no process for examining the impacts of decisions in one silo on processes in another silo. In short, there is very weak horizontal integration.

To solve this in an ODL institution is going to require lots of small changes, as well as some large changes to a multitude of processes, as well as the creation of procedures to ensure management of the horizontal impact of decisions. This is an issue being addressed by other large distance education institutions. To solve some of this, Unisa has a business architecture/enterprise architecture goal as part of the 2007 Operational Plan (3.4.1. Business Architecture). Unisa has embarked on the Business Architecture project, which is designed to create a blueprint of how the institution should look as an ODL institution. Creation of the blueprint has been outsourced.

We are concerned that the Business Architecture project might assume that a static blueprint will serve the needs of ODL. Instead of following the established practices in Enterprise Architecture, which provides for a more fluid model with inbuilt agility, a static approach to business architecture might not serve the needs of an ODL institution.

We are also concerned that the Business Architecture project has been outsourced to a company that has very limited – if any – experience with ODL institutions or higher education in general. There is concern that what will be delivered might not be useful in allowing Unisa to change its business processes to align more fully with its ODL mission.

We are also concerned that Enterprise Architecture (EA), which should represent a mindset change for an organisation that leads to better horizontal integration, is being used in a non-standard way to refer to multiple aspects of vertical systems. EA should include governance and practices required not only to create but to maintain horizontal integration throughout the life of the organisation. To work, EA must be owned by the highest level of management in the organisation.

Other mechanisms of horizontal integration are in place, including integrated planning. However, this needs to be watched carefully.

Recommendation 53

Unisa Senior Management should look carefully at the Business Architecture/Enterprise Architecture literature and practices, and ensure that it is able to align the business processes for its core business of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement in relation to ODL and the IT systems that support those business processes.

14.0 Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

14.1 Commendations

1. The TAP commends the Unisa Senior Management and many of its staff for their understanding of the need to establish a culture of continuous improvement, to embrace appropriate change and to urgently manage this change across the institution.
- * 2. The TAP commends Unisa for its inspiring and challenging mission, the mission's fitness for purpose in contributing to transformation in South Africa and for the clarity with which the Strategic Plan is written with its challenging and focussed targets.
- * 3. The TAP commends Unisa for establishing its programme of awareness-raising among the existing staff of the nature of Open and Distance Learning and how it differs from working in a traditional higher education institution.
4. The TAP commends Unisa for its plan to introduce managed open admissions across the University in 2008.
5. The TAP commends Unisa for establishing an early retirement policy and suggests that the institution may wish to offer financial settlements over a relatively narrow window of time to encourage speedy decision-making by individuals. We also think that the University should examine the consequences of re-hiring retired staff on a contract basis for its equity targets.
6. The TAP commends Unisa for having clear strategic and operational plans which reflect the mission and vision of the University and with clearly allocated responsibilities at senior management level for implementation, monitoring and responsive action. It also commends the establishment of performance contracts which play a pivotal role in the management of the operational plan.
7. The TAP congratulates the University on its Dashboard: 2015 report to Council on the progress of the targets in the strategic plan and the equivalent process for the operational plan.

8. The STC is commended for its efforts in working for positive changes in the teaching and learning transaction at Unisa; viz, implementation of uniform delivery model at least for the undergraduate level, implementation of the 'managed admission/registrations' policy, and the promotion of alternative approaches to learner support.
9. The TAP commends Unisa for having taken steps to develop a network of QA mechanisms and locations to institutionalise Quality Assurance operations at all the relevant levels and components of the University. The TAP views the massive work done in connection with the Trial Audit and the Trial Audit itself as ample evidence for what is expected to come.
10. The TAP commends the work of the Academic Planning Office for its role in developing processes for and controlling the number and relevance of courses in the new Unisa.
11. The recent establishment of Quality Assurance committees in the colleges, reporting to the University QAC, is to be commended even though the system has not yet had time to become fully established.
- * 12. The TAP commends the crucial and proactive role ICLD is playing in making the pedagogic profile/face (the study materials) of Unisa presentable and usable. It is an excellent service to staff and students at Unisa.
13. Unisa is to be commended for the establishment of the Bureau for Counselling, Career and Academic Development, and for staffing it with committed people who see and accept the vision of the University. The Bureau is a vital component of achieving the goals of ODL.
14. Unisa is to be commended for setting up the Advocacy and Resource Centre for Students with Disabilities and for staffing it, in part, with people who are themselves people with disabilities and all of whom are deeply committed to improving the experience of Unisa students with special needs.
- * 15. The Library is to be commended for the enthusiasm and commitment of staff to providing equitable services to the large variety of Unisa students, efforts to build profitable collaborations and to mobilise relevant ICT applications, and efforts to bridge the digital divide by providing training in the use of technology for students to benefit from the e-component of the Library. For example, it has provided reference materials for distance learning as well as electronic references, and developed information literacy courses.

- * 16. The IT team is to be commended for the myUnisa initiative. What has been achieved, and the scale of those achievements, is astounding. Students have an opportunity for engagement with the University and each other through technology, and the uptake suggests that there is a demand that exceeds the expectations of the academic staff.
- * 17. Unisa is to be commended for its effective processes that use satellite and videoconferencing technologies, which reach out to students via regional and associated facilities and that can easily be adapted for alternative means of delivery.
- 18. Unisa is to be commended for the important service provided through the UCC. We have reason to believe that the teething problems are transitory, and that the Contact Centre is a major asset to the University. In an ODL context, this is a vital initiative.
- 19. The TAP commends the process by which the Short Learning Programme course approval requires market research and employer liaison.
- 20. The TAP commends Unisa for setting up a regional structure and for the clear description of the responsibilities of regions as set out in the Portfolio. It considers a regional structure to be a major component of a quality distance education system in a country as large as South Africa.
- 21. We commend the work of those programmes (e.g. Health Studies and Correctional Services), which are well organised and provide a significant contribution to the needs of South Africa.
- 22. The TAP commends Unisa for the establishment of the Throughput Forum and the Information and Strategic Analysis Unit with their focus on understanding the complex issues relating to student throughput in a complex university.
- 23. The TAP commends the establishment of a 'fair selection' training programme for the Chairs of appointment panels.
- 24. The TAP commends Unisa and ICLD for developing an induction programme for new academic staff.
- 25. The TAP commends Unisa for its clear and comprehensive assessment policy.
- 26. The TAP commends the process of RPL in the institution and regards it as a major access route to many who may not have had previous formal academic training.
- 27. The TAP commends the care taken to support students in developing their RPL portfolios.

28. We commend the commitment of many individual staff to supporting post-graduate students.
29. The TAP commends Unisa for the care with which the agreements with institutions in other countries are developed.

14.2 Recommendations

1. The TAP agrees with the proposal for an independent review of the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan on a 3-5 year basis and suggests that this be undertaken immediately after the HEQC audit in late 2008 (Portfolio page 25).
2. Relevant exposure to the ODL programme should be mandatory for all teaching and relevant support staff. The University should also consider how it can ensure that future staff are informed about the nature of the institution before their appointment. It may also wish to reflect on the reasons for the lack of understanding of the nature of the institution by a substantial number of younger students and potential students.
3. Unisa should consider giving high priority to the further development of myUnisa for pedagogical purposes to help position itself as an ODL institution of the 21st century.
4. Unisa may wish to re-visit its priorities to ensure that the provision of improved services to students in South Africa, including the support of younger students - leading to improved throughput - is made clearer as the main priority for all staff.
5. In the interests of openness and equity, a careful review should be undertaken of academic staff promotions policies and practices. Each promotions cycle should culminate in the publication of data pertaining to the number of staff applying for promotion and the number achieving it by race, disability and gender.
6. Unisa Senior Management might wish to consider ways of ensuring that equal opportunities and diversity training are implemented across the institution.
7. The office of the Ombudsman should be independent of the University management and its location should demonstrate this.
8. There should be clear procedures for complaints and grievances for staff and students and a separate academic appeals process and detailed records should be kept of complaints (page 67 Portfolio).

9. The University should review its operational plan for 2008 - making sure that all priorities identified can be delivered and setting out those actions that are critical, ensuring that human and financial resources are focussed on achieving the targets in those areas and that line managers are totally involved and committed to achieving the required outcomes.
10. Unisa has an over-complex committee structure. The University may wish to consider implementing a review of its governance structure with the aim of reducing the number of committees and clarifying and simplifying decision-making processes. For example, consideration could be given to merging the Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committees given their joint responsibilities for providing overall support to learners. The TAP was concerned about the ability of Senate to effectively monitor the University's academic standards with regard to research and teaching and suggests the role and modus operandi of Senate is reviewed as a matter of urgency.
11. It might be helpful in the future for Unisa to use the contemporary terminology used in ODL operations and literature, substituting delivery model for tuition and using tuition for the process of interacting with students.
12. The forthcoming policy proposal for a managed open admissions system should be fully costed before it is put to Senate. Senate should not discuss the details of the resources necessary, but should assure itself that they are adequate for the task in hand.
13. There should be a clear statement on the devolved powers of Colleges, which includes accountabilities and clear requirements for reporting.
14. Post release should be devolved to Heads of Units who would be responsible for reporting frequently to HR on the patterns of new appointments.
15. Unisa should consider re-locating the ICLD into the Academic Support Portfolio (Vice-Principal (Academic and Research)) as soon as possible.
16. All students of Unisa should be provided with a Unisa e-mail address.
17. Achievements in the writing of high quality courses/modules (with external refereeing) should become part of the academic promotion criteria and carry as much weight as research.
18. Ways need to be found to implement the policy of working on a single house style for study materials across colleges/departments/institutions for at least the undergraduate level.

19. A thorough review of the teaching model of Unisa should be undertaken, bringing in external expertise as appropriate, and the development of electronic assignments and online group and individual support should be accorded high priority
20. The portal myUnisa should be developed for pedagogical purposes as quickly as possible. Unisa should consider the extent to which its future strategy, at least for learner support and teaching support (rather than the delivery of content), will depend on IT. The digital divide should be noted, but should not prevent Unisa from moving forward. After all, only a small percentage of students can manage to attend face-to-face tutorials at present.
21. We suggest Unisa should review and streamline its approach to tutoring and develop online training materials to support tutors in the process of tutoring, devolving more and clearer responsibility to regional directors for the provision of this service, within central policy guidelines provided by the University.
22. There should be a process of systematic feedback from students on their tutorial experience.
23. Unisa should consider making better use of social networking technologies to reduce the isolation of its distance students. This should also include the acquisition of skills by Unisa in e-counselling. Professional resources also need to be available in the regions. The Bureau must play a vital role in the business analysis that leads to the design of a Unisa tracking or profiling system, as it should be a key component of the interventions that such a system should produce. Academic counselling should be also addressed by academic staff, which should be in direct contact with students through myUnisa and other avenues (telephone, SMS, e-mail, etc.).
24. Unisa should rationalise its library services by reducing/eliminating undergraduate student visits to the library and should help provide study spaces that are designed for purpose in order to help reduce the load on the Library.
25. As an essential component of the study materials sent to students, Unisa should provide 'Readings' to reduce the ever growing physical pressure on the Library, allowing it to devote its resources and time to improve its technology-enhanced services.
26. Unisa should consider moving the printed materials production, and possibly despatch as well, to a more convenient location. Such a location could be warehouse-based. This should also include the development of an efficient architecture for these mission critical business processes. The potential of on-demand printing should be further explored.

27. In view of the fact that Unisa sees itself as a leading ODL institution, it should establish an effective policy and implementation mechanism obliging all academic staff to integrate the pedagogical application of myUnisa into their teaching, while at the same time taking into consideration those students who are unable to get online. Anything that can be done online should be done online; for example, the grading and feedback on submitted assignments. Engagement through myUnisa should be incorporated into promotion criteria. Better connection needs to be made between myUnisa and the assignment system, as well as other systems such as video-conferencing and satellite broadcasting. Social networking functionality should be implemented on myUnisa as it can help alleviate the sense of isolation that students in distance learning experience (see the section on Counselling).
28. Better integration should be achieved between myUnisa and these initiatives, including scheduling and making available the recorded lectures and video conferences, recognising the constraints on bandwidth that currently exist. Newer and cheaper alternatives to satellite broadcasting should be explored in relation to the ODL philosophy. In addition, SMS technologies should be integrated with myUnisa to help improve the student experience.
29. The teething problems experienced by the UCC must be solved before the HEQC audit or it will be a risk to Unisa. We believe that this will be the case, but it should be monitored by senior management. Special attention needs to be given to better alignment between the UCC and the business that it supports. Contact information on all Unisa publications should give the UCC number, rather than the business unit directly. The role of the UCC should be better publicised within Unisa. It should be kept in mind that this centre represents a primary interface for students and the public, and therefore forms the public perception of the institution, so the quality of this service must be excellent.
30. The Quality Assurance processes relating to the short course area should be reviewed as soon as possible and that the size and shape of the short course curriculum be determined by the University as a conscious policy rather than leaving it to the current ad hoc processes. Course approvals must be informed by management information about the staffing and systems capacities, to deliver such a programme in relation to the core ODL business of the University.
31. Short Learning Certificates should be made more secure and less easy to photocopy.
32. Electronic systems for the handling of formative assessment should be introduced as soon as possible and the manual scanning process for handling examination scripts should be updated as soon as possible.
33. A formal system should be put in place to ensure that the collective view of the regions is fed back regularly to the appropriate central departments.

34. Unisa should further review its WIL programmes and consider their size and shape. It should also be clearer about its own responsibilities for helping students to find placements. If regions are expected to play a major role here, then they should be resourced to do so.
35. The University should develop a system, accessible to academic and academic support staff, which enables the tracking of the progress of individual students. It should also re-structure its learner support to employ staff whose prime responsibility it is to provide informed advice and guidance to individual students about their general progress within the University and who would be able to direct students to other sources of specialist help (e.g., careers advice).
36. All role and person specifications in recruitment documentation should make quite clear what is expected in an ODL institution with Unisa's mission.
37. The fair selection programme should be made mandatory for all staff chairing appointment panels and the nature of the programme should be reviewed on a regular basis.
38. Measures should be taken to ensure that formal, recorded induction is mandatory for all new academic staff (including new contract staff) and that completion of the programme (it need not be lengthy) is a necessary pre-requisite for completing probation.
39. A formal mentoring system should be introduced for all new staff.
40. The use of external experts to comment on new course outlines and materials should be mandatory for all new courses.
41. A student feedback system should be introduced for all new courses.
42. Unisa should keep records of the return of assignments to students and the work of individual markers, whether full-time academics or markers hired for this purpose, monitored (in peer groups?) in terms of speed of return and of the quality of teaching comments.
43. The costs of RPL and the way in which students are supported need to be kept under review. Some ODL institutions offer distance courses to help RPL students construct portfolios. Unisa (as an ODL institution) may wish to consider limiting the areas in which it offers RPL to ensure that students registering receive a quality service.
44. Unisa should set out clearly the Quality Assurance processes applying to RPL.

45. Whilst all academic staff should engage in scholarship in their own discipline, we are not convinced that it is the right of every academic to undertake individual research. We recommend that the University establishes approved research groups in line with its mission, and that all researchers are linked into such groups.
46. The Research Directorate is working well and its role, as the executive arm of the Senate Research Committee, should be developed to provide strategic thinking on research across the institution.
47. Systemic research (i.e., research in ODL processes, products, outcomes, clientele, learning strategies, learner requirements, etc.) should be main-streamed with obligatory contributions from academics and (if possible) administrators.
48. There should be clear expectations regarding the role of internal supervisors for post-graduate students. Supervisors should be trained in the role and students should be told how often their supervisor will contact them. Supervisors should be expected to take a proactive role.
49. The main mode of contact between supervisor and doctoral students should be online. Colloquia and seminars should be organised online for students who are unable to visit the campus at Muckleneuk.
50. With regard to “Community Engagement”, as is acknowledged in the Portfolio, Unisa does not meet the HEQC criterion at present. It probably needs to do less and plan more and consider being clearer about where the responsibility for coordinating Community Engagement lies. What is the link between the community developers in the Learner Support, the Alumni and Communications divisions? Even though CHE is vague at present, Unisa should develop its own policy as quickly as possible. The first step would be to undertake a scoping study of all the activities currently regarded as Community Engagement and then think through what kind of engagement Unisa would like to maintain and develop in future. This may involve closing down some activities which are seen to be of vital importance by some individuals.
51. A detailed University plan for all surveys should be developed and all surveys should lead to follow-up work in which action plans are developed from the outcomes of the surveys.
52. Unisa should pay particular attention to the Quality Assurance of the learner support processes for cross border students.
53. Unisa Senior Management should look carefully at the Business Architecture/Enterprise Architecture literature and practices, and ensure that it is

able to align the business processes for its core business of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement in relation to ODL and the IT systems that support those business processes.

APPENDIX 1

Acronyms

CHE	South African Council on Higher Education
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DLS	Digital Learner Support
DOE	Department of Education
EA	Enterprise Architecture
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
ICLD	Institute of Curriculum and Learning Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MIS	Management Information Systems
NADEOSA	National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
PARC	Professional and Administrative Research Committee
PQM	Programme and Qualifications Mix
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SBL	Graduate School of Business Leadership
SENREC	Senate Research Committee
SMS	Short Message Service

INSTITUTIONAL TRIAL QUALITY AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

STC	Senate Tuition Committee
TAP	Trial Audit Panel
TSA	Technikon Southern Africa
UCC	University Contact Centre
VUDEC	Vista University Distance Education Centre
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

APPENDIX 2

The Trial Audit Panel

The Trial Audit Panel members were;

COL co-ordinator

Dr W Clarke-Okah, Commonwealth of Learning

Panel Chairman

Dr R Mills, Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, Cambridge, UK

Panel members

Dr R Butcher, Open University of Hong Kong

Professor Olugbemi Jegede, National Open University of Nigeria

Dr D Keats, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Professor B King, University of Abertay, Dundee, UK

Professor B.N. Koul, Koul Consultants, India

Ms Z Varoglu, UNESCO, France

Mr A Wong, Hong Kong University

Panel Secretary /Head Scribe

Mrs S Stewart, University of Abertay, Dundee, UK

Observers

Professor K Osam, University of Ghana

Dr F Rodrigues, University of Ghana

Commonwealth of Learning

1055 West Hastings Street, Suite 1200

Vancouver, BC V6E2E9

Canada

T. 604.775.8200

F. 604.775.8210

E. info@col.org

www.col.org

